

Abraham Lincoln

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK • KENTUCKY



The Boundary Oak.

Near this famous landmark stood the cabin in which Lincoln was born.



Abraham Lincoln

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Here began the life of Abraham Lincoln, the man who, more than any other, preserved the American Union in the time of its greatest crisis, 1861–65.

On a raw frontier farm of rolling land on the edge of “the Barrens,” in the cabin by the Sinking Spring, was born the man whose strides carried him awkwardly, yet majestically, over a path which began in common Kentucky clay and ended in immortality. Here was born the man who said, “Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope in the world?” More enduring than bronze or marble, this spot shall speak its message of the mystery and majesty of life to Americans down through the ages.

The Lincoln Family

At the close of the Revolution, during Indian wars and raids, the Lincoln family moved to the frontier region of Kentucky. The father of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President, was Thomas Lincoln; his grandfather was Abraham, for whom he was named. His great-grandfather was John Lincoln, who had moved from near Reading, Pa., to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. John Lincoln's son, Abraham, together with his family, moved across the mountains into Kentucky sometime between 1782 and 1784. Here Abraham, the grandfather, was killed by an Indian from ambush. This event probably occurred in May 1786. Thomas, the youngest son, was then about 10 years old.

About 1800, Thomas Lincoln settled in Elizabethtown and during the next few years was a hard-working and industrious man of that community, acquiring a repu-

tation as a carpenter.

On June 10, 1806, Thomas Lincoln filed a declaration of intention to marry Nancy Hanks, and 2 days later, they were married by Rev. Jesse Head. The newly married couple made their home in Elizabethtown. Here their first child, Sarah, was born in 1807.

The image of Nancy Hanks is blurred and uncertain to us of this generation. One authority has said of her, “dim as the dream of a shifting mirage, her face and figure waver through the mists of time and rumor.” Although her physical features left no definite impression upon the minds of those who years later tried to recall her image, there is an almost unanimous agreement among these witnesses concerning her mental and spiritual attributes. That she was possessed of a fine native intelligence, courage, and a morality above reproach and that she was kind and affectionate seem fairly clear.

The Birthplace of Abraham Lincoln

On December 12, 1808, Thomas Lincoln bought for \$200 in cash a 300-acre farm, known as the Sinking Spring Farm, situated a few miles south of Hodgen's Mill. Here, he and his wife and their infant daughter took up their abode in a one-room log cabin near a large limestone spring of cool water which had given its name to the place. It was in this one-room log cabin near the Sinking Spring that the child, Abraham, was born to Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln on February 12, 1809.

The Lincolns lived about 2½ years at the birthplace site, which eventually was lost to them because of a defective land title. Prior to midsummer in 1811 they moved to a farm on Knob Creek, about 10 miles to the northeast. Their residence there lasted only a few years, for in November or December 1816, Thomas Lincoln left Kentucky and made a new home in the wilderness settlement of Little Pigeon Creek, about 16 miles north of the Ohio River, in Indiana. Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the mother of Abraham, lived only about 2 years after they moved to Indiana. An epidemic came to the little settlement on Pigeon Creek and, while attending the stricken, she herself was taken ill and died within a week, on October 5, 1818. The mother of Abraham Lincoln was buried in an unmarked grave in a little clearing in the deep woods.

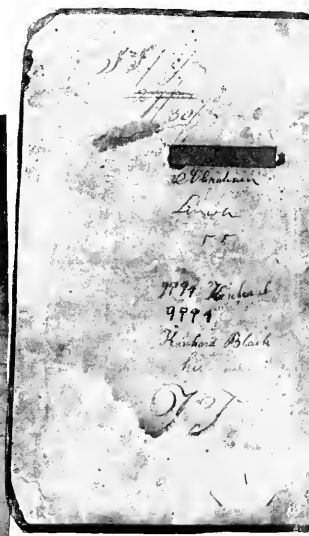
The Birthplace Cabin

From 1861 to the present, the history of the log cabin which is now displayed

within the Memorial Building is fairly clear. Its history prior to 1861 is a matter of controversy and doubt. Nor is there conclusive evidence concerning the specific location of the original cabin. Certain testimony indicates that it stood on top of the knoll where the Memorial Building is now situated; still other that it stood under the knoll, a short distance from the Sinking Spring and about on a level with it.

Dr. George Rodman was the first individual to become interested in preserving the cabin. In March 1861, he bought a log cabin standing on the birthplace farm and moved it a little over a mile to the north and reerected it on his own farm. Here it remained until 1895, when it was purchased by a representative of A. W. Dennett of New York and returned to the Lincoln farm where 110½ acres of land had been purchased about this time by Mr. Dennett. In the succeeding years the cabin was dismantled and the

Traditional Lincoln birthplace cabin showing door and window



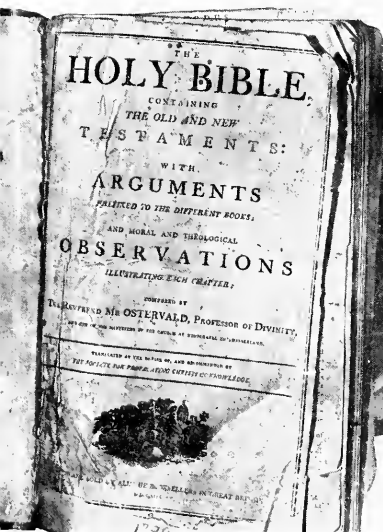
logs carefully marked and taken to various expositions throughout the country. Eventually the cabin was stored in the basement of the old Poppenhausen mansion at College Point, Long Island, N. Y. It remained there until 1906 when it was purchased by the Lincoln Farm Association. It was then sent to Louisville under a military escort where, after being re-erected as a feature of the Louisville Homecoming celebration, it again went into storage. In 1909, the cabin was moved temporarily to the birthplace farm for the ceremonies attending the laying of the cornerstone of the Memorial Building. In 1911, upon completion of this structure, the cabin was taken on the last of its travels back to the site of its origin and reerected within the Memorial Building.

The Farm and the Memorial Building

In 1904, the Lincoln Farm Association was formed for the purpose of raising funds by popular subscription to purchase

the birthplace and make it a national memorial. Richard Lloyd Jones, then managing editor, and Robert J. Collier, publisher, of Collier's Weekly, were its leading members. Of the 116½ acres now comprising the historical park, 110½ were purchased for the Lincoln Farm Association in 1905, although title did not pass to the association until 1907. On April 16, 1916, the Lincoln Farm Association decided its holdings to the United States of America.

The Memorial Building, designed by John Russell Pope and built of Connecticut pink granite and Tennessee marble, was constructed by the Lincoln Farm Association in the years 1909-11 through funds raised by popular subscription. Over 100,000 citizens, many of them school children, contributed to this fund. The cornerstone of the building was laid on February 12, 1909, the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, and it was dedicated on November 9, 1911.



The Memorial Building



Bible of Thomas Lincoln, father of Abraham Lincoln. In Lincoln Museum, Washington, D. C.



The Sinking Spring

The Park

Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park comprises 116½ acres of land, nearly 100 acres of which were included in the original Thomas Lincoln farm. Here are the Memorial Building housing the traditional Lincoln birthplace log cabin, the Sinking Spring, and the ancient boundary oak tree which was a landmark at the time of Lincoln's birth. The area was

established as a national park in 1916. On August 11, 1939, the designation was changed to Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park.

How To Reach the Park

The Abraham Lincoln birthplace is about 3 miles south of Hodgenville, Ky., on U. S. 31E and State Route 61. U. S. 60 intercepts U. S. 31W at Fort Knox about 30 miles north of Hodgenville. U. S. 62 intercepts U. S. 31W at Elizabethtown and leads to Bardstown and on into the heart of the Blue Grass at Lexington.

About Your Visit

You may visit the birthplace farm and the Memorial Building every day. There are attendants on duty at the Memorial Building to help you by answering any questions you may have. Those who plan to visit in a group may receive special service if advance arrangements are made with the superintendent.

You may obtain further information about this and other areas of the National Park System from the superintendent.

Administration

Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Hodgenville, Ky., is in immediate charge.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

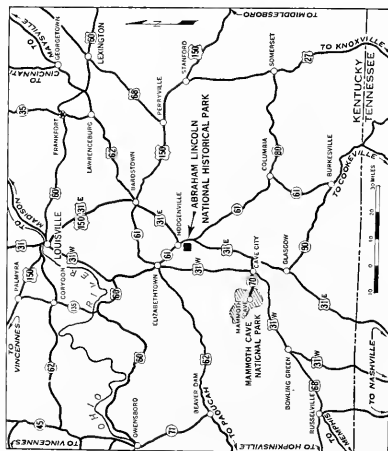
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fred A. Seaton, *Secretary*

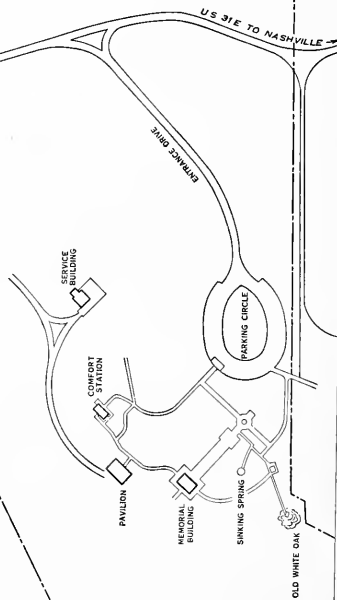
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



ABRAHAM LINCOLN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK KENTUCKY



VICINITY MAP



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